

CAMP at Work



David McNamara
IT Consultant II
South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

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Executive Summary

This project seeks to examine the benefits of implementing a mentorship program within the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Though agency workers tend to be closely familiar with the work processes of their own respective program areas, most employees have only a very limited understanding of how the rest of the agency operates. This program would provide SCDHHS employees not only with a broader perspective on how the agency's mission is served across different program areas, but also valuable networking opportunities along with possible ideas for process improvement. As a bonus, employees would reap these numerous benefits at no cost to the agency whatsoever.

The SCDHHS mission statement is as follows: "To purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer." Many of our employees know it by heart but have only a limited understanding of how that mission is served across the agency. My CPM project addresses this limitation for all agency employees who would seek to overcome it.

Gap Analysis

A. Current State

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services offers new employee orientation as well as area-specific training, but it previously did not offer a formal program allowing agency employees to visit other agency offices to learn how they function. As a result, most employees worked within their individual silos with fewer opportunities to learn about other areas. It was a case of the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing.

The agency periodically offers leadership development retreats which are useful opportunities for managers from various areas to meet. In terms of networking, though, the managers benefit, but not their employees. Also, certain agency offices occasionally hold all-staff meetings several times a year which serve to update members of that office on what types of projects their colleagues are currently working on, but the scope of these meetings very rarely involves information pertaining to outside offices.

During my planning stage meeting in August of 2017, my manager, Linda Larimore, tasked me with developing an apparatus for SCDHHS employees to learn more about other areas within the agency. This idea was loosely based on her experience with STEP-21 (Strategic Training & Education Program for the 21st Century), a mentorship program implemented at the South Carolina Department of Transportation in the late 1990's and early 2000's. Linda would allow me to develop the plan with minimal supervision while I would make sure to obtain her approval and buy-in when necessary.

With this mandate, I began planning a pilot program in which members of the IT Service Desk would visit mentors representing other program areas within the agency. Sessions would last up to one hour and, unlike STEP-21, which took place in a group setting, would be one-on-one between an IT Service Desk team member and a mentor in another program area. Each session would be created and managed by me via Microsoft Outlook, and I would keep track of everyone's progress in an Excel spreadsheet. I contacted managers I knew throughout the agency to solicit mentors, and many of them and their direct reports offered to serve as mentors. Once a mentee from the IT Service Desk had visited each of the agency's primary offices, they would have completed the program and would receive a certificate of completion as well as recognition on the homepage of the CAMP SharePoint site.

I named this initiative "Cross-Area Mentorship Program", or "CAMP". I chose this name for several reasons:

- 1) It is memorable.
- 2) It suggests a temporary but pleasant experience.
- 3) It speaks somewhat to how the program operates, as one could say, "John Smith from IT is camping out in Finance at the moment."

One aspect of CAMP that I believe broadens its appeal is the fact that it is structured such that the mentor and mentee do not need to bother with managing their own appointments since that is handled by me. All they need to do is show up if available and communicate with their mentor/mentee and me if they can't make it. Also, it is completely up to the mentor to decide what to cover and how much, even if a session does not last a full hour.

I continued to develop the program throughout the fall of 2017. In late September, I commissioned a logo for CAMP (seen on the title page of this document) designed by one of our IT Service Desk technicians, Russell Orris, who does graphic design work in his spare time. The CAMP logo incorporates the same colors as the SCDHHS logo, and I wanted it to support the “camp” theme while suggesting a meeting between two people: a mentor and mentee. As both work and information technology would somehow be involved in any CAMP meeting, both figures in the logo are using laptops. The fire represents the benefits of the program to both the mentor and mentee (described in greater detail in the “Evaluation Method” section below).

In October, the groundwork was laid for one of the most important elements of the program: a Microsoft SharePoint website that would serve as a central hub for all CAMP information to assist all participants: myself, mentors, mentees, and prospective participants. I met with Franchesta Stokes, Ashley Edmond and Kashia Doyle from our SharePoint team to brainstorm ideas for site content. The SharePoint site was created shortly afterward and includes an “About” page with description of the program, a “Mentors” page with the names of all participating mentors, a “Sessions” page showing all scheduled CAMP sessions (this replaced my Excel spreadsheet for keeping track of sessions), and my contact information for those wishing to enroll as a mentor and/or mentee. Our SharePoint team eventually granted me additional permissions to manage the site without needing to involve them.

During the same period, while I was developing the SharePoint site, I was also working to include a survey option for participants whereby a mentor and mentee, if they choose, could submit feedback to me after each session. I worked with one of our network technicians, Liz Parham, to create two surveys: one tailored specifically for the mentor, and one for the mentee.

This was accomplished using LimeSurvey, and links to both surveys were added to the CAMP SharePoint site. Some of the questions included:

- Was your mentor/mentee on time?
- What overall rating would you give your mentor/mentee?
- What overall rating would you give the session?
- What did you learn about your mentor's area that you did not know before?
- How could your work processes or those of your program area be improved by what you learned from your mentor?

The first CAMP session took place on January 26, 2018, between Brooke Bailey in Communications and me. I made it a point to schedule my sessions in rapid succession so that I could finish the program and begin scheduling sessions for others as soon as possible. I completed CAMP on February 20 and began scheduling sessions for other IT Service Desk staff shortly thereafter. Though the pilot program was in full swing by this point, it would continue to evolve.

I had decided that, if approved, my CPM project would involve expanding CAMP within SCDHHS such that any agency employee in our headquarters building could participate as a mentee, not just members of the IT Service Desk. To accomplish this, I knew it would be important to have buy-in from certain key individuals and departments. Moving forward, I sought to do that whenever necessary.

B. Desired State

In May of 2018, I met with Boyd Shealy in Human Resources to discuss my intentions. He was fond of the idea but wanted to ensure that agency workers in different counties could have the option to participate in the program if they chose to. He was concerned that these workers had sometimes felt out of the loop in the past when it came to decisions made at headquarters in Columbia, so it was important to him that they were included. It was decided that this could be achieved using Skype for Business, already a commonly-used tool in our agency. Still, because some workers in the field do not have audio or video capability for Skype, meetings could alternatively be conducted by telephone. Mentors' phone numbers are listed on the CAMP SharePoint site, so mentees have the option to call their mentor at their scheduled time for their session.

July was a crucial month for the program. On July 5, Nathan Strong approved the expansion of CAMP as my CPM project, and on July 20, Human Resources gave their formal approval for the program be expanded within the agency. By this point, we had roughly 30 employees who had offered to serve as mentors, and numerous IT Service Desk staff had either completed the program or were well on their way to finishing. Initially, managers on our team were going through the program first, followed by technicians.

In September, I began working closely with our Communications team to plan an announcement to be posted on the Connector, our agency-wide SharePoint site featuring agency news and employee spotlights. This would be the formal introduction of CAMP to the agency and would include basic information on the program as well as a link to the CAMP SharePoint site

inviting employees to enroll as mentors and/or mentees. The announcement was posted on October 3, and enrollments for both mentors and mentees increased steadily afterward. In order to enroll, I specified that the supervisor would first need to give their approval so that they would be in the loop on their employee's involvement in the program.

One issue I encountered early in the expansion process was related to mentors. My hope was that each office participating in the program would have at least a handful of employees willing to serve as mentors. This was to help ensure that there wasn't a situation in which there were only one or two mentors representing an office and therefore having to do all the sessions for that office, thus resulting in a bottleneck. Still, I had to accept whatever number of people were available for an office at any given time. At the moment, we have at least one office that has only two mentors. This being the case, I make every effort to spread out the sessions for both of those mentors as much as I can so that they do not feel overloaded.

As of this writing, we have mentors representing the following agency offices:

- Administration and Chief Compliance
- BabyNet
- Behavioral Health and Long Term Living
- Eligibility, Enrollment and Member Services
- Finance
- Health Programs
- Information Management

This list comprises the majority of primary offices within the agency (with each office consisting of multiple program areas). There are a couple of other offices in the agency that currently have no available mentors, though that could change eventually. There is a new office, Medicaid Operations, for which I am in the process of soliciting mentors.

When CAMP first started in early 2018, mentees would need to visit a mentor in each SCDHHS office in order to complete the program. At the time, there were eight primary offices, but the number of offices changes over time. However, mentees must now visit a mentor in five offices before completing the program.

This change was made for several reasons:

- It ensures that a mentee's progress in the program would not be stalled due to bottlenecks, as described in the previous paragraph.
- Five is an easy number to remember and remains consistent even as the number of agency offices may fluctuate over time.
- It is a more manageable number for both the mentee and me.

C. Future State

CAMP is now a popular and thriving program at SCDHHS. There have been over 110 sessions to date, and at least three sessions usually take place on any given day. Creating and managing sessions has now become a daily part of my routine, and I frequently receive enrollment requests. At the IT Service Desk, it is a requirement for new employees to complete CAMP as part of their orientation process, and I can see it eventually becoming a requirement in other program areas as well since most managers would presumably want their employees to take advantage of an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the agency.

Occasionally, I have been asked whether management of the program falls more within the scope of an area outside of Information Technology, such as Human Resources. Because of the extent of IT work involved in the program, such as site design and management for the CAMP SharePoint site as well as session management in Microsoft Outlook, there is a significant IT component to the program. As the call center manager for our IT Service Desk, I am in my office much of the day ensuring that our team provides fast, courteous and effective service to agency employees. Because I am at my computer frequently, I am able to manage CAMP sessions diligently and update the site as needed.

Since its inception in August of 2017, I have worked to perfect the format and flow of CAMP so that it remains manageable and scalable. The one-on-one format of the sessions will continue, SharePoint will remain the primary hub for the program, and I will keep monitoring feedback obtained from surveys and emails. Going forward, I see CAMP functioning in much the same way as it does now, and I will solicit additional mentors as the program continues to grow.

D. Evaluation Method

In addition to instilling in participants a greater appreciation for how different program areas function, one of the primary goals of CAMP is to promote ongoing process improvement throughout the agency. The program is already achieving this through the opportunities it provides for networking and knowledge transfer. The one-on-one format of the sessions is much more intimate than, say, a program area representative speaking to a room full of people from other parts of the agency. The program could not function without the generosity of its mentors regularly taking time out of their busy day to give a mentee more insight into what they and their area do, and this also has the added benefit of helping the mentor stay current on their own work processes while sometimes learning new ideas from their mentees.

As mentioned previously, mentors and mentees both have the option to complete a survey after each session, and they frequently do. I have already received dozens of surveys since the program's inception, and as it stands now, I am the only one who has permission to view the survey results. The feedback has been extremely positive thus far and has given me a clear understanding of the degree to which CAMP has benefitted both mentors and mentees as well as how much both groups appreciate that SCDHHS now offers a formal mentorship program.

Here is a selection of survey comments from mentees:

- "I enjoyed it and feel it can be beneficial for the agency."
- "My mentor was very informative. She explained her duties and how it relates to the overall process of helping our Medicaid population. Great session!"

- “I think by learning what an area's program responsibilities are, you can now put a name with the face of the program. In other words, I can now have a direct contact if any program-specific issues or concerns arise.”
- “My mentor educated me on the program details, organizational platform, and what they handle daily. It was a true pleasure meeting with her and gaining more insight into departments I would not have known about otherwise.”
- “BabyNet's child find and public awareness efforts could be integrated with EEMS activities.”
- “If there's one thing I learned: whenever submitting a contract or budget request to Finance, make sure you know where the money is coming from!”
- “I had a great mentor. She had full knowledge of her division and Medicaid as a whole, and she gave me a neat way to remember the difference between Medicaid and Medicare. I will truly keep this one in the books and use it to train others.”

To monitor process improvement over time, I intend to contact former participants periodically to ascertain if their work processes have changed for the better as a result of their experience in the program. Additionally, I will seek opportunities to thank mentors for volunteering their time for CAMP. For example, I hosted a holiday drop-in for mentors in December of 2018 to show my appreciation and to help encourage their continued involvement in the program.

Here is some feedback I have received from participants who are currently implementing process improvements in their areas, or have otherwise benefitted as a result of their experience in CAMP:

- “My mentor was aware of the RMMIS effort, but not informed about how the changes to the MMIS system will impact her work. I will make sure that information about the RMMIS program is communicated back with my mentor’s program area so they can be better informed.”
- “I can use background information on Behavioral Health and Long Term Living if a client inquires about them when I am interviewing. I will be able to point them in the direction needed to complete whatever is necessary for them to start the process or attain information.”
- “I learned that BabyNet is working to revise their policy manual. I connected my mentor with Health Programs staff working on our policy manual revisions with support through a contractor. I think this will help both areas work toward having consistent policy manual structures.”
- “I can give more information to beneficiaries that are inquiring about LogistiCare services and how they can get in touch with the program itself. I have gained detailed information regarding the background workings in each department to make things go smoothly.”
- “I shared more information about RMMIS and related projects with several of the mentors that I met with. I also connected some of my program area staff with mentors to discuss projects that aligned and could collaborate. Finally, I have been working on outlining a new work process for our area and reached out to a mentor/one of his staff members to see if they could share information about how that program area had written procedures for similar processes.”

- “Knowing more about how our software systems are used in the eligibility process can help IT Services to provide the best possible support.”
- “I was able to provide my mentee with suggestions regarding advocacy for a family member who has cancer.”

Developing and managing the Cross-Area Mentorship Program has been the most rewarding experience of my career to date. It is always immensely gratifying when a mentor or mentee goes out of their way to tell me how much they enjoyed a session and plan to implement its lessons in their work. I look forward to continuing to observe the many positive effects of the program on the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services over time, and I would extol the virtues of a similar type of mentorship program for any organization.

Appendix

Initial Email to Prospective Mentors

From: David McNamara

Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 4:03 PM

Subject: Cross-Area Mentorship Program (CAMP)

Good afternoon,

The IT Service Desk is in the process of developing a pilot program in which each member of our team, including managers, would have an opportunity to visit workers in other areas within the agency to learn more about the work they do as well as how the work of the IT Service Desk impacts those areas. This experience will provide our team with a broader understanding of how the agency's mission is served across different divisions.

CAMP is intended to be a one-on-one experience between a mentee from the IT Service Desk and a mentor from a different program area. It is designed to be as accommodating as possible for the schedules of both the mentor and mentee: the mentee would have one visit lasting at least an hour with one mentor from a particular area. Once they have visited all participating areas, they will have completed the program.

I wanted to see if you would be interested in having several workers from your area assist as occasional mentors. If so, please let me know the following when possible:

- Names of workers who would be interested
- The general availability of those workers
- Some bullet points of topics that you would want them to cover regarding that area

I will then reach out to those workers to schedule appointments once we start putting team members through the program.

If you have any questions for now, please let me know.

Thanks,
David

CAMP Announcement

Cross-Area Mentorship Program (CAMP)



CAMP allows employees to learn about different program areas and how they each play a role in the successful achievement of our mission.

For more information on this program and how to enroll, please visit the CAMP SharePoint site or contact David McNamara at David.McNamara@scdhhs.gov.

Certificate of Completion Template

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

John Smith

has shadowed a mentor in five SCDHHS offices participating in the

CROSS-AREA MENTORSHIP PROGRAM



PROGRAM MANAGER: David McNamara

AWARDED ON THIS DAY: January 25, 2019